

# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## AMERICAN LEGION POST 15 CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

American Legion members from Post 15 gathered in Sioux Falls last weekend to celebrate 100 great years!

SDDVA Program Manager Erin Bultje provided the members an SDDVA update and thanked them for their unending commitment to our veterans and their families.



State Commander Denny Brenden and Post 15 Commander Kevin Hempel also addressed the members.

SDDVA's Bultje assisted Commander Hempel (on the left) and 98 year old Donald Swearingen (oldest American Legion member) cut the

anniversary cake.

During the festivities, George Hawkins, a teacher at New Technology High School in Sioux Falls, was recognized as American Legion "Teacher of the Year."

Happy Anniversary Post 15!



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# CODINGTON COUNTY VETERANS COURT

SDDVA Program Manager Erin Bultje and Codington County Veterans Service Officer Al Janzen participated in the Codington County Veterans Court graduation ceremony this week. Janzen serves as a member of the Veterans Court Team and presented the veteran with a patriotic quilt while commending him for his recent accomplishment and thanking him for his service.

Veterans Court involves cooperation and collaboration with traditional partners found in Drug and Mental Health Treatment Courts such

as the prosecutor, defense counsel, treatment providers, court services, and law enforcement. Added to this interdisciplinary team are representatives of the Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans Benefit Administration— as well as State Departments of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Outreach Centers, Veterans Service Organizations, Department of Labor, volunteer Veteran Mentors, and other veteran support groups. Veterans Courts admit only those veterans with a clinical diagnosis of a substance abuse and/or mental health disorder.

The Codington County Veterans Court pledges that “Out of respect and concern for all who serve or have served in the armed forces, consistent with principles of protection of the public and rehabilitation, the Codington County Veterans Court is committed to using all available resources to assist and empower justice-involved Veterans in reclaiming their mental and social wellbeing.”

The first court to focus solely on treatment of justice-involved veterans was established by Judge Robert Russell in Buffalo, New York in 2008. The success of Judge Russell’s Veterans Court has gained national attention and created a movement to establish courts based upon the Buffalo model throughout the United States. In 2013, out of respect and concern for our veterans, the Chief Justice of the South Dakota Supreme Court, David Gilbertson, initiated the process of establishing Veterans Courts in this jurisdiction, with the Codington County Veterans Court being one of three pilot programs in the state.





# PRECISION HEALTH INITIATIVE BRINGS GENETIC TESTING TO VETERANS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that, as part of an innovative partnership, the VA and Sanford Health, one of the nation's largest nonprofit health care systems, will soon provide free genetic testing to some veterans cared for by VA.

The VA PHarmacogenomics Action for cancer SuRvivorship (PHASer) testing program will begin a pilot program this year at the Durham VA Health Care System that will enroll all cancer survivors who receive treatment at the facility. The program eventually will expand to enrolling some 250,000 U.S. Veterans at 125 sites.

A recent Dartmouth study found that VA medical centers "outperform private hospitals in most health care markets throughout the country."

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie lauded the partnership, and said relationships like this will continue to expand the department's delivery of world class health care.

"This screening test will help providers at the VA prescribe the most appropriate medications at the right dose for cancer survivors," Wilkie said. "Our goal is to continue delivering the best care possible for our nation's heroes, and this partnership helps us do just that."

PHASer is funded by a \$25 million gift from philanthropist Denny Sanford, for whom the health system is named, and an effort by Sanford Health to raise matching funds. The test can help providers determine which medications will be most effective for patients, improving access to appropriate treatments and reducing adverse drug reactions, which research shows costs up to \$30 billion per year.

The test results will help with clinical decision making for all types of prescribed medications, including cardiovascular and mental health diseases and pain management. Veterans will be able to access the test at their local VA facilities, and Sanford Health will process the tests at its South Dakota-based Imagenetics facility.

"We have seen firsthand how this testing can positively influence patient care," said Kelby Krabbenhoft, president and CEO of Sanford Health. "Through the generosity of Mr. Sanford, we are proud to join the VA to make the test available to our nation's veterans."

[Sanford Imagenetics](#) began in 2014, and more than 90 percent of patients who have been tested have been found to carry a genetic change that could affect medication selection or dosing. Test results are shared with physicians through the electronic medical record to ensure efficiency and accuracy in choosing treatments.

For more information on the PHASer testing program resources for Veterans visit

[https://  
imagenetics.sanfordhealth.org/  
veterans-genetic-testing/](https://imagenetics.sanfordhealth.org/veterans-genetic-testing/).



# SAVE THE DATE

In less than two months, over 80 veterans from Northwest Iowa, South Dakota, and Southwest Minnesota will participate in Mid West Honor Flights Mission Four. Veterans will depart from Sioux Falls to travel to our nation's Capitol on Tuesday, May 7.

Their tour will consist of a visit to The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington National Cemetery, Iwo Jima, Air Force Memorials, Navy Memorials and stops at the World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Memorials.

South Dakotans are invited to give these veterans a "WELCOME HOME" from their final tour with honor. Let's show these World War II, Korean and Vietnam Veterans how much we appreciate their service to this great country. Doors will open at the Sioux Falls Convention Center arena at 7:45 pm with the heroes arriving at about 9:00 pm (CT).



Welcome Home Ceremony  
Tuesday, May 7, 2019 at 9:00 PM  
**Door Open at 7:45 PM**  
Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena

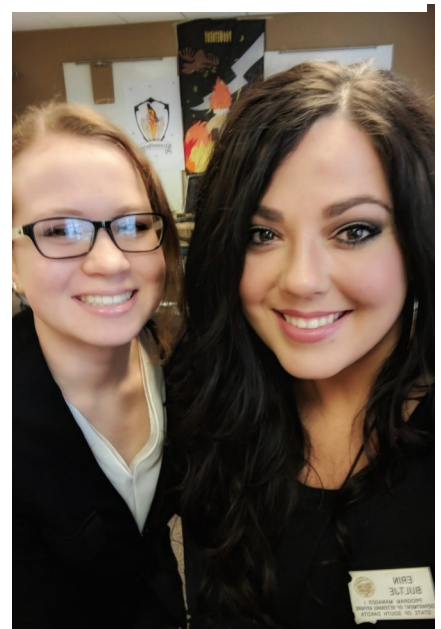
# BULTJE ADDRESSES STUDENTS AT NEW TECH HIGH SCHOOL

SDDVA Program Manager Erin Bultje donned her backpack this week and made a visit to New Tech High School in Sioux Falls. Bultje participated, along with two Vietnam Veterans, in a panel to talk about military experiences.

The students at New Tech High School are studying the price of war and will be debating both sides of the issue.

Bultje has been invited back to serve as a judge for their debate presentations.

Sofi Skonhovd, a junior at New Tech, was instrumental in securing Bultje for this panel. Her goal was to bring both the female and the OEF/OIF Veterans viewpoints to the panel.

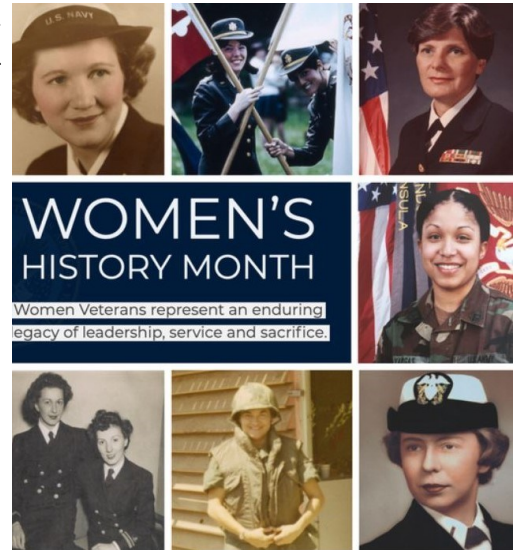


# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Every year March is designated Women's History Month by Presidential proclamation. The month is set aside to honor women's contributions in American history.

The theme for 2019 is "Visionary Women: Champions of Peace & Nonviolence." This year we honor women who have led efforts to end war, violence, and injustice and pioneered the use of nonviolence to change society. These Honorees embraced the fact that the means determine the ends and so developed nonviolent methods to ensure just and peaceful results.

The month of March affords all of us a great opportunity to thank the women that have made a difference in their lives, their community, their state and this nation.



# GOVERNOR PROCLAIMS MARCH 29 VIETNAM VETERANS DAY IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Governor Kristi Noem has declared March 29, 2019, as National Vietnam Veterans Day in South Dakota, and asks South Dakotans to pay tribute to the fallen, the missing, the wounded, the millions who served and the millions more who awaited their return.

More than 27,000 South Dakotans served valiantly under difficult circumstances during the Vietnam War and 210 made the ultimate sacrifice.



# **VA STRENGTHENS CARE AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS WITH \$220 BILLION BUDGET**

President Donald J. Trump is proposing a total of \$220.2 billion in his fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a 9.6 percent increase above fiscal 2019.

“The budget request will ensure the nation’s Veterans receive high-quality health care and timely access to benefits and services,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The budget supports the most significant transformation of VA since its inception, positioning the department as the premier provider for Veterans’ services and benefits. This is a significant increase in VA funding and demonstrates the administration’s commitment to supporting our Veterans.”

The FY 2020 budget includes \$97 billion (an increase of \$6.8 billion, or 7.5 percent) in discretionary funding, including resources for health care, benefit administration, and national cemeteries, as well as \$123.2 billion (an increase of \$12.3 billion or 11.1 percent) in mandatory funding above 2019 for benefit programs inclusive of Compensation and Pensions, Readjustment Benefits, Housing and Insurance. This budget provides robust funding for the secretary’s top priorities.

MISSION Act: \$8.9 billion for implementation of the Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (MISSION Act) to provide greater choice on where Veterans receive their care, maintain care for current Choice Program users, provide a new urgent care benefit and expand the Caregivers program.

Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM): \$1.6 billion (\$496 million above FY 2019) to create and implement a single longitudinal electronic health record for military service members from their active duty to Veteran status, and ensure interoperability with the Department of Defense. The increase will support ongoing activities at the three initial deployment sites and the deployment to further sites, as well as additional site assessments.

Transforming Business Systems: Funds the continued deployment of a modern integrated financial and acquisition management system (\$184.9 million) and implementation of the Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support (\$36.7 million).

Improving Customer Service: \$8.1 million to maintain VA’s trajectory of improving its customer service. The results of a recent customer-experience feedback survey of Veterans regarding their trust of the department’s health care outpatient services showed “trust scores” for outpatient services increased from 84.7 percent in June 2017 to 87.9 percent in January 2019.

Preventing Veteran Suicide: \$9.4 billion (\$426 million above 2019) for mental health services, which includes \$222 million for suicide-prevention outreach, a \$15.6 million increase over 2019.

(continued on next page)



# VA BUDGET (continued)

Women's Health: \$547 million (\$42 million above 2019) for gender-specific women's health care. This increase will help meet VA's goals of developing Designated Women's Health Primary Care Providers at every site where women access VA care, and improve the availability and quality of services to women Veterans.

Capital Investments: \$1.6 billion for major and minor construction, including \$410 million for the construction of a new hospital in Louisville, Kentucky, and \$150 million for the Manhattan, New York, medical center.

Budget materials are available here: <https://www.va.gov/budget/products.asp>.



## MOPH STATE CONVENTION

The Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter No. 5354 of Rapid City will host the Military Order Of The Purple Heart (MOPH) 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Department convention April 6. Convention activities will be held at the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) headquarters (101 E Madison Street) in Rapid City.

Reservations for luncheon and banquet dinner can be made by contacting HG Krosschell at: (605) 484-8155 or email at: [hgkrosschell@rushmore.com](mailto:hgkrosschell@rushmore.com) or Daniel George at: (605) 787-3881 or email at: [solsossnafu@yahoo.com](mailto:solsossnafu@yahoo.com).

The convention will kick off at 10:00 am (MT) with an open session, followed by luncheon at 11:30 am. Business meeting begins at 1:00 pm. Social and dinner start at 5:00 pm.

The "Military Order of the Purple Heart," was formed in 1932 for the protection and mutual interest of all who have received the decoration. Composed exclusively of Purple Heart recipients, it is the only veterans service organization comprised strictly of "combat" veterans.

The mission The Purple Heart is to foster an environment of goodwill and camaraderie among combat wounded veterans, promote patriotism, support necessary legislative initiatives, and most importantly, provide service to all veterans and their families.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 20—South Dakota Veterans Council meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
Mar 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)  
Mar 29—Vietnam Veterans Open House—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—1:00—3:00 pm (CT)  
Mar 29—Vietnam/Vietnam Era Veterans Reception—SFVAHCS Front Foyer—4:00 pm—6:00 pm (CT)  
Mar 30—Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in South Dakota  
Apr 6—State MOPH Convention—Rapid City DAV (101 E. Madison Street) - 1:00 pm (MT)  
Apr 13—Boots to Business Reboot—Zeal Center of Entrepreneurship (2328 N. Career Ave.) - Sioux Falls—8:30 am—4:30 pm (CT)  
Apr 19—State Offices Closed  
Apr 22—State Offices Closed  
May 7—MidWest Honor Flight Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—7:45 pm (CT)  
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—TREA (1981 Centre Street)—Rapid City—10:00 am—3:00 pm (MT)  
May 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—Post 8 American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)  
May 9—SDDVA Mini Conference—VFW (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)  
May 14—Bill Casper's Annual WW II Luncheon—TREA—Rapid City  
May 17—Veterans Honor Concert—State Veterans Home—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)  
May 17-19—DAV Convention—Hilton Garden Inn (5300 S. Grand Circle) —Sioux Falls  
May 27—MJFSVH Memorial Day Car Show—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)  
Jun 13-16—VFW State Convention—Dakota State University—Madison  
July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL  
Aug 3-6—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL  
Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School



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South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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